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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

ESSAYS AND MISCELLANIES. By JOSEPH AUERBACH. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1914.

As a critic, Mr. Auerbach represents both the literary and the practical modes of thought, and the combination makes for vigor and zest. The two volumes of his recently published *Essays and Miscellanies* reflect the enjoyment which a cultivated taste for books may bring to the busy man of affairs—to him, perhaps, in larger measure than to the mere litterateur—and they are further characterized by a logical tautness and trimness and a sober sense for real values which are reactions from a life in which intellectual keenness and soundness are constantly brought into play. As a lawyer, Mr. Auerbach loves clearness and completeness, and is ready to give reasons for the faith that is in him. When he attacks “the increasing disregard among us for literature and for style in composition,” he makes his critical standards plain by an abundance of instances. Having absorbed the spirit of the great authors and seized upon their thought with thorough realization of its actual value, he brings sharply home to us the vitality of the relation between literature and life both in the private and in the larger public sense. With freshness and energy he writes of the Bible as a living force in literature, demonstrating with illuminating concreteness—through analysis of phrase and method—how largely modern style owes its best qualities to the Biblical element. Deducing from a study of the Bible narrative such lessons as that of parallelism—by which “the thought of one line is elaborated and reinforced by the succeeding line of similar import or of contrast”—he impresses his readers with a realizing sense of the practicality of the standard which the Bible sets, and of how superior to text-book rules and vague discussions of taste are principles based upon sound and appreciative analysis. Mr. Auerbach has a rather special message for the man of trained intellect who—as Joseph Choate phrases the case in the foreword he has written for *Essays and Miscellanies*—has “allowed himself to become so absorbed in the pressing demands of every-day life as to forget much with which he was once absolutely familiar and to have lost by burial in the gray matter of his brain the great thoughts of great writers which were once his own.” The author’s plan for a series of classics edited in collaboration by scholars and practical men of the world deserves wide consideration. Writing upon political as well as literary subjects, Mr. Auerbach impresses us by the breadth and honesty of his reasoning, while in his essay upon “A Club” he gives us, through his suggestive rendering of the sentiment common to a group of congenial minds, something of as much value as are his logical conclusions.